DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 430 479 HE 032 070

AUTHOR Garman, J. F.; Crider, D. A.; Teske, C. J.
TITLE Course Selection Determinants: A Comparison of "Distance Learning" and "Traditional" Wellness and Physical Education Programming.
PUB DATE 1999-00-00
NOTE 11p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Students; Age Differences; *Course Selection (Students); *Decision Making; *Distance Education; Health Promotion; Higher Education; Nontraditional Students; Physical Education; Questionnaires; Reentry Students; *Student Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS *Kutztown University PA

ABSTRACT

This study compared reasons college students gave for choosing either "distance learning" or "traditional" courses in wellness and physical education. Students at Kutztown University of Pennsylvania, who were enrolled in either traditional (n=195) or distance learning (n=100) wellness and physical education curricula, anonymously completed a questionnaire designed to assess demographic variables and rank criteria considered in course selection. These criteria included two variables that addressed chronology; one variable that focused on curriculum concerns; three variables focusing on performance issues; six variables for instructional issues; and one variable that allowed identification of other considerations. Participants in traditional courses identified curriculum relatedness (class content) as the most important criterion, while subscribers to the distance learning format were primarily concerned with chronology (scheduling convenience). Among the younger traditional students, anecdotal responses suggested course selection was driven by a concern with expeditiously fulfilling university or curriculum requirements. Results suggest that courses available via distance learning are more attractive to older, nontraditional students. (DB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 430 479

HE

Course Selection Determinants: A Comparison of "Distance Learning" and "Traditional" Wellness and Physical Education Programming

J. F. Garman, Ph.D.
D. A. Crider, Ph.D.
C. J. Teske, Ed.D.

Department of Health, Physical Education and Dance,
Kutztown University of Pennsylvania
Kutztown, Pennsylvania 19530

HE032070

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J.F. Garman

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✔ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ABSTRACT

A self-administered questionnaire was utilized to comparatively assess student course selection determinants in a basic instructional wellness and physical education curriculum. Specifically, it was the intent of this inquiry to identify rationales utilized for selecting courses offered via "distance learning" and evaluating how they differ from "traditional" course selection criteria. Students in "traditional" classes prioritized "class content" while "distance learning" class participants focused on "scheduling convenience" in the selection of courses.

INTRODUCTION: As higher education expands its use of the "virtual" classroom (Laws, 1996), assessing student rationales' for selecting courses offered via "distance learning" and evaluating how they differ from "traditional" course selection determinants becomes organizationally and fiscally advantageous. Prior research indicates that student course selection criteria for "traditional" collegiate offerings includes course content, curriculum requirements, scheduling "fit," career relatedness, reputation of instructor and time of day (Garman, 1995; Martin, 1989; Hendel, 1982; and Lorenz, 1982). However, empirical investigations on this topic appear not to be available. Formally identifying student rationales' for course selection may result in data that could enhance the subscription of both "virtual" and "traditional" collegiate courses. It is hypothesized that results will indicate primary course selection determinants for pursuing wellness and physical education curricula via "distance learning" are different from those supporting the "traditional" format.

METHODOLOGY: Participants were voluntarily recruited from matriculating and continuing students enrolled in wellness and physical education curricula at Kutztown University of Pennsylvania where specific courses were available in both the traditional" and "distance learning" format. Subjects were asked to anonymously complete a self-administered survey designed to assess demographic variables and numerically rank selected criteria considered in "traditional" versus "distance learning" course selection. The instrument utilized was a modification of a subject specific questionnaire developed by Garman (1995), and was a composite of primary course selection variables as identified by previous investigators (Martin, 1989; Hendel, 1982; and Lorenz, 1982). These criteria included two variables that addressed chronology; one variable that focused on curriculum concerns; three elements that addressed performance issues; six variables that addressed instructional issues and one variable that provided for the identification of other considerations (Table I). The resulting information was numerically coded and subjected to statistical evaluation that provided descriptive measures of central tendency, evaluated between group differences and provided an item analysis of student prioritized course selection variables. Results were considered significant at $p \leq 0.010$.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics and response patterns for participants in both "traditional" and "distance learning" classes are recorded in Table II. Measures of central tendency for participants from "traditional" classes ($n = 195$) identified a sample that was 64.67 percent female, was comprised of 50.67 percent first and second year students, reflected an age of 21.48 ± 0.454 (mean $\pm$ sem) years and had completed 2.51 ± 0.089 (mean $\pm$ sem) years in higher education. Additionally, 10.00% of this group were considered "non-traditional students" by exhibiting a chronological age equal to or greater than 25 years (State System of Higher Education, 1999). Students participating in courses taught via "distance learning" ($n = 100$) reflected

measures of central tendency describing a sample that was 75.26 percent female and included 52.13 percent of first and second year students with an age of 22.44 ± 0.622 (mean ± sem) years. "Distance learning" participants completed 2.48 ± 0.144 (mean ± sem) year of school and 23.96 % of this experimental group met the "non-traditional student" age criteria. Analysis of variance identified the primary course selection determinant as the single element differing between groups. This finding was supported by the results of the course selection criteria item analysis.

An evaluation of the three most frequently occurring course selection variables (Table II) indicated different priorities given to the primary selection consideration. Participants in "traditional" courses identified curriculum relatedness (class content) as the most important criteria while subscribers to the "distance learning" format were primarily concerned with chronology (scheduling convenience). Rationales for these differences cannot be empirically supported. However, among the younger "traditional" students, anecdotal responses suggested course selection was driven by a concern with expeditiously fulfilling university wide or discipline specific curricular requirements and complying with recommendations of academic advisors. These varied curricular related rationales, in these students' estimation, were addressed through the selection of "class content." Compatibility with daily schedules, perhaps due to a higher percentage of students ≥ 25 years frequently with comparatively more family responsibilities and/or employment obligations, was the critical variable, identified anecdotally, among students electing "distance learning" courses. Intuitively that stance is easily understood, for being able to pursue course work in a manner that provides a modicum of flexibility is desirable when time demands are critical. These results support data that suggests courses available via "distance learning" are attractive to older, "non-traditional" students and reflect evolving "distance learning" course subscription patterns evident within the local University environment (Crider, 1997).

Though items prioritized as the second determinant differed between groups both related to chronological issues and were not statistically significant. The tertiary course selection determinant in both "traditional" and "distance learning" groups reflected convergent thought by focusing on curriculum concerns (class content). In general, these collective results reflect no variation from selection rationales previously reported (Garman, 1995; Martin, 1989; Hendel, 1982; and Lorenz, 1982) for collegiate undergraduate classes. Further comparison of group course selection variables by gender, age classification (< 25, ≥ 25) and school year (< 3, > 2) identified a continued concern with and prioritization of chronological and curriculum relatedness issues but showed no statistically significant between group differences.

CONCLUSION

Within the limits of this inquiry, the following conclusions appear justified. Primary course selection determinants for pursuing wellness and physical education curricula via "distance learning" differ from those supporting the "traditional" format. Scheduling convenience was the most critical selection determinant among participants in the "distance learning" offerings and class content as it related to curriculum/program requirements was paramount among the "traditional" subscribers.

Table I

CLASS SELECTION SURVEY

AGE _____ GENDER _____ YEAR IN COLLEGE _____ DATE _____

Rank the five (5) **MOST IMPORTANT** reasons for selecting your health or wellness class (1 = most important; 5 = least important).

_____ Class content (C)*

_____ Previous experience with/exposure to activity (P)*

_____ Time of day of class meeting (T)*

_____ Assigned faculty (I)*

_____ Perceived difficulty of class content/requirements (P)*

_____ Gender of faculty (I)*

_____ Friend enrolled in class (P)*

_____ Age of faculty (I)*

_____ Expertise of faculty (I)*

_____ Scheduling convenience (T)*

_____ "Reputation" of faculty (I)*

_____ Faculty's style of teaching (I)*

_____ Other (Please explain. Use opposite side if necessary.) (M)*

---

*Variable categories not identified on issued surveys

C = Curriculum Relatedness
I = Instructional
M = Miscellaneous
P = Performance
T = Chronology

Table II

Course Selection Determinants
Group Characteristics and Response Patterns

Variable	"Traditional"	"Distance Learning"	p
n	195	100	
Age (mean ± sem)	21.48 yrs. ± 0.454	22.44 yrs. ± 0.622	0.181
% ≥ 25 yrs. (%)	10.00	23.96	0.234
% Female (%)	64.67	75.26	0.144
School Year* (mean ± sem)	2.51 ± 0.089	2.48 ± 0.195	0.016
Primary Selection Determinant (%)	Class Content (28.65)	Scheduling Convenience (40.21)	0.000001**
Secondary Selection Determinant (%)	Scheduling Convenience (25.68)	Time of Day (25.88)	0.227
Tertiary Selection Determinant (%)	Class Content (19.10)	Class Content (24.36)	0.790

* 1 = Freshman, 2 = Sophomore, 3 = Junior, 4 = Senior, 5 = Four years +, 6 = graduate

** Significant between group differences at $p \leq 0.010$

REFERENCES

Crider, D. (1997). Distance Learning: Promises and Pitfalls. Paper presented at the meeting of the Kutztown University College of Education Faculty Forum, Kutztown, PA.

Garman, J. F. (1995). Course selection determinants in basic instructional programming. Unpublished manuscript, Kutztown University of Pennsylvania, Department of Health, Physical Education and Dance, Kutztown, PA.

Hendel, D. (1982). Evaluating the effects of a course evaluation system designed to assist students in electing courses. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, NY.

Laws, R. (1996). Distance learning's explosion on the internet. Journal of Computing in Higher Education, 7, 48-64.

Lorenz, G. (1982). Faculty and student views of information systems to improve course selection. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, NY.

Martin, E. S. (1989). The relationship among college student characteristics and their assigned importance to dimensions of course choice information. Journal of College Student Development, 30, 69-76.

State System of Higher Education. (1999). Institutional Factbook for Fall 1998. Kutztown University of Pennsylvania, Kutztown, PA.